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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [TSPL](#) [KNNP](#) [ETTC](#) [ENRG](#) [TRGY](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: KARAT AND KAKODKAR SPAR IN PRESS WHILE INDIA
CONTINUES GLOBAL NUCLEAR PUSH

Classified By: Political Counselor Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

11. (C) Summary: After several weeks of near-silence, Communist leader Prakash Karat denounced the civil nuclear initiative February 11, and demanded that the UPA government wait to finalize the IAEA safeguards agreement until the next U.S. administration comes to power. Department of Atomic Energy Secretary Anil Kakodkar, however, voiced more optimistic remarks February 12, when he noted that India has approached the IAEA talks in a "positive way." Meanwhile, the Indian government has continued to host a flurry of Prime Ministers from Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) countries, culminating in the finalization of an agreement for Russia to construct four additional reactors in Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu, but conditioned on an IAEA agreement and NSG exception. Karat's comments complicate India's attempt to de-emphasize the U.S. element of the nuclear initiative and move forward on the international IAEA and NSG actions. End Summary.

Karat Throws Wrench in the Reactor

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12. (SBU) Speaking at a Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) conference in Kerala February 11, CPM General Secretary Prakash Karat launched a renewed and broadened attack on the U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation initiative. "The Left will not allow the UPA to cement and forge a tie-up with the U.S., including the nuclear agreement," he asserted. "We have made it clear that no government supported by our party and the Left would allow the government to forge such an alliance with the United States," he stated. Karat demanded that the Congress Party seek a referendum from voters during the upcoming general election. "If (the government) likes to have a strategic alliance with the U.S., take these issues to the people in the next Lok Sabha (lower house) polls," he said.

13. (SBU) Karat also maintained February 12 that the UPA government should wait until after the U.S. presidential election to finalize the IAEA safeguards agreement. "We are now in the final stages of struggle against the nuclear pact," he underlined. He added that the CPM would not allow India to become an ally of "imperialistic forces" as a result of the "one-sided deal" with the U.S. The February 13 Hindustan Times interpreted Karat's speech as a message to the Congress Party that foreign policy would figure large in any future Congress-led coalition that includes the Left parties.

Kakodkar Reports Progress

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¶4. (C) While Karat reiterated the Communist stance against the nuclear deal, Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Anil Kakodkar provided a mildly positive update on the IAEA talks to the press. "I always work in a positive way. If everything works out, we will do it," he told reporters in New Delhi February 12. Fresh from a clandestine meeting in Munich with National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan and IAEA Director General Mohammed ElBaradei, Kakodkar noted that "work is in progress."

India Continues Global Nuclear Engagement

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¶5. (SBU) While Karat signaled that the Left will continue fighting the nuclear initiative, the UPA government continued its effort to engage other countries besides the U.S. in the endeavor. Most prominently, the February 12-13 visit by Russian Prime Minister garnered the lead headline in the February 13: "Talks finalized for more Russian nuclear reactors." In his opening statement to the press, Prime Minister Singh said that "we have finalized negotiations in regard to reaching an agreement on cooperation in the construction of additional nuclear power plants in India." Like the French agreement finalized during President Nicolas Sarkozy's January 26 visit, Russia and India will sign the agreement after the IAEA Board of Governors approves the safeguards agreement and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) makes an exception for India, according to Russian Political Counselor Valery Khodzaev. Unlike the French agreement, however, the Russian agreement specifies that Russia will build four additional reactors in Kudankalum, where Russia is

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currently constructing two 1000-megawatt reactors. (Note: A report on the Russian summit will be sent septel. End Note.)

¶6. (C) The Russian summit followed a week in which the Prime Ministers from Norway, Denmark and Finland also engaged in nuclear diplomacy with Prime Minister Singh. Dorte Bech Vizard, First Secretary from the Royal Danish Embassy, told poloff February 13 that PM Singh asked that Denmark support an NSG exception for India during the February 6 summit. Although Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen had talking points prepared, Vizard said that he inexplicably did not respond to Singh's request, which she felt might complicate relations with India. The talking points, Vizard divulged, recognized the importance of nonproliferation and climate change, and promised that Denmark would look at it. In addition, she added, PM Rasmussen was supposed to have stressed to PM Singh that Denmark would not join the opposition in the NSG despite strong opposition at home.

¶7. (C) Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg also heard PM Singh's plea during his February 8 visit to Delhi, according to Norwegian DCM Lasse Johannsen. Johannsen related that Stoltenberg replied that Norway recognizes India's right to nuclear energy to meet its energy demands and to address the challenge of climate change; looks forward to continued engagement with India on the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and is "prepared to engage actively to find a consensus-based solution in the NSG."

Don't Forget Canada!

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¶8. (SBU) Canadian High Commissioner David Malone also participated in the nuclear press mela, as he told a group at Cochin University that he expected a year or two year delay in the nuclear deal "unless something changes politically in Delhi." He noted that the Canadian government has yet to make a decision. "The urgency for Canada to think about all of these was less than it would be if it had to adopt a decision in the NSG next week," he said. He stressed that Canada remains open to fixing its relationship with India.

"Both governments...woke up to the fact that allowing one issue to dominate the relationship was a bad idea, and that we could agree to disagree about what happened in 1974 and move on recognizing that India had not proliferated internationally since it created nuclear weapons."

¶9. (C) Asked about Malone's comments, Canadian Political Counselor Adrian Norfolk related that Canada has approached the Indian government formally to discuss the impact of an umbrella IAEA safeguards agreement on the existing safeguard agreements that cover the two Canadian-supplied reactors in Rajasthan. Norfolk reported that he discussed the issue with Ministry of External Affairs Director (Disarmament and International Security) Amandeep Singh Gill, who assured him that, whether under an umbrella agreement or not, the Indian government had no intention of weakening the coverage of existing safeguards.

Comment: Renewed Challenge From Karat Complicates the Nuclear Future

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¶10. (C) The Indian government's effort to broaden the nuclear initiative beyond the U.S.-India relationship appears to have failed in its goal of providing the Left with a face-saving way to back down. Instead, Karat has refocused his stance by contending that the Indian government should wait to finalize the IAEA agreement until after the U.S. presidential election, which would stall the nuclear initiative to the next Administration in 2009, by which time India will undergo its general elections. Moreover, he made clear that for the Left to support any successor UPA government, it must include a foreign policy plank in its Common Minimum Program (CMP), which dictates the policy of a UPA-led coalition. While the current CMP lacks a directive on U.S.-India relations, Karat would likely demand that the Congress Party make clear that it will not become a strategic ally of the U.S. in any post-2009 government. Karat has made clear that the Left has no intention of allowing the nuclear initiative to move forward.

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